

Dispersal as a Possible Check on Parasitisation

By Col. A. M. EMMET

In the spring of 1960 I encountered mines of *Aegeria andrenaeformis* Lasp. in the wayfaring tree (*Viburnum lantana* L.) in the Saffron Walden district of Essex. I collected sixteen without difficulty, and could have taken more, but I expected these would be sufficient for my needs. In the event, I bred only one moth and about a dozen parasites (I failed to keep an exact record of the number). The larva lives for two years, and the few mines which produced nothing were, I think, first year mines.

In 1961 I spent more time and effort searching for mines, but they proved to be far scarcer. Moreover, in that year a new predator was in evidence, for many of the mines had been pecked open, presumably by tits. This operation had been skilfully performed a few inches above the point at which the frass was extruded. However, after considerable search I found twelve tenanted mines. From these I bred, once again, only one moth, and parasites from most of the remainder.

Between 1962 and 1965 I looked only casually for *andrenaeformis* and failed to find it, but since I was curious to know whether the predators had been too much for it, this year (1966) I made a thorough search of the areas where I had previously taken it, and examined upwards of a hundred bushes in the process; however, I failed to find any trace of the species other than the old mines. This negative evidence does not prove conclusively that it is now extinct in the locality, but this may well be the case.

One wonders how such heavily persecuted species survive. It is possible that to some extent they are nomadic, and a female from time to time colonizes a new area where her offspring enjoy a temporary immunity from their predators: the parasites have not yet caught up with them and, in the case of *andrenaeformis*, the local tits have not yet learned to peck out the larvae (compare their acquired habit of pecking through milk bottle tops). This is only a hypothesis, but some support is given by my experience last year with *Nepticula tityrella* Stt. I bred eight moths from only eight mines which I had collected from a plantation of very young beeches situated, as far as I know several miles from any other beech tree: the Nepticulidae normally suffer from a high incidence of parasitisation, and it is most unusual to have 100% success in breeding them.

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MAY MIGRANTS.—A fresh looking specimen of *Vanessa cardui* L. was seen in Shanklin on 3rd May, 1966. No more were noted until 23rd May when five were seen on Brading Down. In the same locality about two dozen specimens were seen on 27th May, mostly feeding on valerian flowers. On the same day a fresh female *Colias croceus* Fourch was captured as it hovered over a clump of horseshoe vetch. The specimen was caged over a pot of white clover, upon which numerous eggs were subsequently deposited. On 29th May, another female *croceus* was captured on Brading Down again fluttering over horseshoe vetch. Having only one pot of clover, this specimen was caged over a pot of horseshoe vetch upon which it began to deposit eggs on the same day. During the above visits to the Down, numerous *Plusia gamma* L. were walked up from the vegetation.—T. D. FEARNEHOUGH, 26 Green Lane, Shanklin, I.O.W.